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no. 13

DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY
AT HOME & ABROAD



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DRAMA

VOL. 8

JANUARY MCMXXX

NUMBER 13

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

SOME RECENT PLAYS

By Percy Allen

JUST as a full course of drama should feed many moods, so also it must be drawn from several periods; and a chance variety, perhaps, explains, in part, the full enjoyment I have drawn from my last half dozen dips into the lucky-bag of the London theatre.

Farthest back, historically, was "Richard II," at the Old Vic., a production that reveals, once more, Mr. Harcourt Williams' remarkable skill in stage-grouping, and provides, in Mr. John Gielgud, one of the very best exponents of Richard's fantastic graces, and feministically lyrical intellectualism, that our modern stage has seen. A richly musical voice, perfect articulation, inflections almost invariably truthful, and a quality of repose remarkable in so young an actor; those added to ease of movement, and expressive gesture, together build up a charming effect. Only in the banishment scene, I thought, is Mr. Gielgud definitely excelled by Mr. George Hayes, admittedly an admirable exponent of this difficult part. Few managers seem to realize that here is one of Shakespeare's most successful acting plays.

From the sixteenth century I passed to the nineteenth, and saw, presented by the Everyman Guild, a Russian play of 1860, Ostrovsky's "The Storm," which came altogether as a revelation to a playgoer who had not realized that, at a time when our own national drama was being stifled by artificiality, and by false romanticism, seven years before the coming of "Caste," a Russian dramatist, heralding Tchekov, was writing plays of simply

appealing naturalism, in which the characters, from first to last, are drawn with the surest sense of pictorial originality, through which, here and there, shines a glimpse of thought-evoking symbolism. Mr. Malcolm Morley is to be warmly congratulated; first as our first English discoverer of Ostrovsky, and, secondly, as the bold and skilful producer of one of the most truthfully acted, interesting and captivating little plays, that I have seen for a long time past.

My remaining two experiences, all, in their degrees, fortunate, began with "Three Times Lucky," which directly its author, Mr. Arnold Ridley—dubious as are so many modern playwrights, concerning the medium within which he must work—had disarmed me, by declaring for farce, instead of comedy—I thoroughly enjoyed, in a condition of mind that awakened memories of W. S. Penley, as a cleric, harassed to piteous bewilderment. But why did certain of my colleagues analyse seriously such a character's psychological inconsistencies? Is it a legitimate part of our task to break springtime butterflies on wheels?

There followed, under the auspices of The Stage Society, much sterner stuff, when the German war-play, "Douaumont," in an English version by Graham and Tristan Rawson, was put on at the Prince of Wales's. After a somewhat languid opening, we owed some thrills, executively, to an actor who has genuine historic forcefulness at command; and who, it would seem, thoroughly enjoys an occasion whole-heartedly to exploit it. I mean of course, Mr. Esmé Percy.

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FURTHER OPINIONS ON THE NATIONAL THEATRE

A few more replies to our National Theatre Questionnaire have reached us since the December number went to press. Notably a general endorsement of the idea from Sir. Henry J. Wood, and the following more detailed statement from

Mr. Bernard Shaw:

"I am of course in favour of the establishment of a national theatre, by which I mean a theatre in London, subsidized from the national exchequer and provided with an eligible site free of rent and rates, like the British Museum and the National Gallery. If the site were provided on these terms the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee could at once provide the building. Every possible expedient for inducing the public to establish the theatre by voluntary subscription has been tried to exhaustion, and tried in vain; and it is now clear that unless the Government decides to found the theatre as a necessary cultural institution nothing can be done until the sum held by the S.M.N.T. accumulates at compound interest for fifty years or so to the required amount for opening what will be, after all, a private enterprise theatre. A national theatre will never pay in the commercial sense, because even if it were to pay its way it could always be made to pay still more by vulgarizing its entertainment. But as the Houses of Parliament do not pay in that sense the Government will hardly use that argument as an excuse for inaction."

Prof. Patrick Geddes feels that it may be necessary to begin on a small scale:

"Why not begin as best you can—with *drama of high quality*, and thus arouse sympathies, and by and by obtain your big subscriptions too? Is not that the way in which all vital movements grow best—by moving ahead? Life advances with action!"

Dr. Bernard Childs, President of the Scottish Community Drama Association, writes as follows:

"I am certainly in favour of an effort being made to establish a National Theatre. Such an Institution should be unfettered in its policy on the technical side; it should, when suitable, be able to employ by invitation special eminent producers (not necessarily British) for special productions; it should experiment not only in new technical methods, but be open to reproduce old methods of production, it should consider "Tours." If the site allows, and it should, a small theatre should be built adjoining the National Theatre for special purposes and for hire to amateurs and others. The rent from this should help finances."

We are also glad to print the following Resolution which has been sent to us by the Secretary of the Actors' Association.

"That this Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Actors' Association supports the British Drama League in urging the Government to institute a National Theatre in London which shall provide fitting presentation and a permanent home for the genius of British dramatists, actors and stage directors, and authorises Mr. Robert S. Young, M.P., to act in this matter on its behalf."

According to our promise we print the views of those who have not felt themselves able to give unqualified approval to the scheme. These, together with the few wholly negative replies, represent less than 5 per cent. of the total number of answers received.

Typical of several frankly non-committal replies is that of Mr. Arnold Bennett, who writes:

"I cannot say I approve of the idea of a National Theatre. Nor can I say that I disapprove. My attitude is non-committal. I very much doubt whether a National Theatre would not do as much harm as good.

Still more pessimistic are the views of Mr. H. M. Harwood:

"I am not at all sure that I am an eager supporter of the National Theatre idea. National theatres, where they exist, have not, in my experience of the last 30 years, been responsible for any but the very smallest proportion of the really interesting dramatic productions. The country where the most famous of National Theatres exists has been during this generation, probably the most backward in Europe; and is only now beginning to look up—and this owing entirely to the efforts of small outside managers.

You say that the approval is not to cover any particular method of organization; but the method of organization is the kernel of the whole problem. I do not believe for a moment that you can have a vital theatrical organization under any other conditions than that of a practical autocracy; and then it all comes down to the question of who is to be in charge, and are his experiments to be subject to the veto of public opinion as expressed through some Committee?

So far as the financial side is concerned it will be quite unnecessary for any endowment to be made. Any theatre that was relieved from the fantastic taxation, under which we at present labour, could perfectly easily make both ends meet while doing anything that could reasonably be expected of a National Theatre. There are at least half a dozen people in the business who would be perfectly willing to run a permanently organised company if the present intolerable financial conditions were removed.

One thing I do feel sure of is that any available funds there may be should not be spent on bricks and mortar, but on three or four years' production spade work; because under almost any conditions it is bound to lose money in its initial stages."

FURTHER OPINIONS ON THE NATIONAL THEATRE

The Earl of Cavan, Earl Howe Sir Edward Gleichen and Mr. Bronson Albery are definitely not favourable to the idea. Mr. James Agate would welcome a subsidized company of actors, but deprecates any expenditure on "bricks and mortar." While Mr. Ernest Newman writes :

"I am not in favour of a National Theatre if it means a theatre in London financed by contributions from the general tax-payer. If London wants a theatre of this sort it should, in my opinion, pay for itself: I see no reason why the theatre lover in Manchester or Glasgow or Bristol should be compelled to pay for it. I should prefer to see municipal theatres in each of the big towns, paid for by the town itself."

Comment on these minority opinions is reserved till our next issue. In the meanwhile, we can do no better than print here the Sonnet which has been sent to us by Dr. Alfred Percival Graves.

FOR A NATIONAL THEATRE.

Can we not find at last a fitting ground,
Where London's mighty heart most proudly beats
Amidst her Old World Shrines and New World
streets
Whereon a National Theatre to found,

Worthy of Shakespeare's, Marlowe's fame renowned,
Congreve's and Farquhar's mirth-compelling feats
The wit and vision of Sheridan, Shaw and Yeats
By Garrick's, Irving's, Thorndike's genius crowned?

Such drama shall compose the repertory
Of such a stage. Theteto let us be mustering
Actors who shall once more so gain them glory,
That playwrights, to recapture them, shall come
clustering,
But all in vain, unless they, too, start vieing
In wholesome Comedy, Tragedy purifying.

ALFRED PERCIVAL GRAVES.

THE PARLIAMENT OF PUPPETS

By Mary Dudley Short

IT might not seem possible to many people that an International Congress could be summoned in the interest of the Marionette, but this incredible thing has actually happened. In Paris, from Friday October 25th, till Monday, October 28th, men and women from various parts of Europe assembled in the concert room of "Le Journal," bringing their dolls with them. Belgium, Germany, Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia gave performances; Russia also sent contributions. England was represented by two members of the British Drama League only. It would be inaccurate, however, to describe the performances as national in character, except as regards language. The Belgian puppets were the exception: these had not only the appearance of dating from the Middle ages, but the reality of a long tradition behind them. Some of them must have been acting since the sculptors of the XIIth century first carved their heads. They were from three to five feet high, according to the importance of the persons they represented: thus Charlemagne was five, and a peasant only three feet. The puppets were held

by a thick wire fixed in the head; no wires were attached to the limbs, which hung loosely. Thus the manipulation was very simple, and the audience knew which puppet was speaking by the agitated movements of its head and little jumps and turns of its body. The Walloon people accept these conventions completely and see nothing amusing in the limitation. Their plays are serious, based on stories of heroes, of which the chief is Charlemagne, whom they have adopted as "le Roi de Liege," or on stories of religious mysteries, the most popular example of this type being "La Naissance," "Une Grande Bataille" is a favourite episode in the plays of the heroes, which is not to be wondered at, considering the number of times Belgium has been the battlefield of Europe. A more thrilling representation of a great battle can scarcely be imagined. When Charlemagne gives the command to his soldiers—"Chargez!" there is a tremendous uproar. The puppets are swung one against the other and his soldiers batter and bang those of "Le Noir Chevalier." Drums

THE PARLIAMENT OF PUPPETS

behind the scenes keep up the excitement, until one by one the wires are dropped and the soldiers of the opposing force lie helpless on the stage. The Belgian people say that the soul of the puppet is in the wire and when they can see it no longer they know that its soul has fled. In both the Charlemagne and the religious plays the figure of Tchanchet gives comic relief. He is the inevitable figure in all Ligegois Drama and the contrast to Charlemagne and the hero actors, who have long



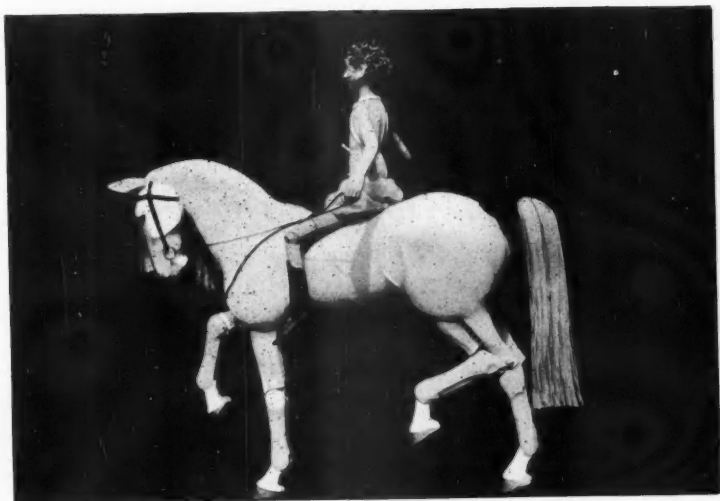
carved heads closely resembling the saints on Chartres Cathedral, and who are dressed according to tradition and speak French. Tchanchet, on the other hand, has a large turned-up nose, suggestive of the peasant type and is dressed like a Walloon and speaks Walloon, his name being Walloon for Francois. He sometimes acts as a kind of show-man and enjoys making remarks to the audience about the grand personages on the stage. He reflects the mind of the audience and never fails to cause uproarious merriment. Even in "La Naissance" he comes to make his offering to the Divine Child

and as he kneels he says, "Oh! what a lovely boy, is it a girl?" Yet reverence is sustained throughout the play, and with touching simplicity Tchanchet gives the Holy Child his red scarf. Most of the Belgian plays are traditional and have been handed down by word of mouth, but "La Naissance" can be traced back to a play of the XIII Century.* Before the war there were at least twenty puppet theatres at Liege; since then cinemas have taken their place and only two remain. Even these do not play regularly, but a performance of "La Naissance" is a certainty at Christmas time. Liege has conceived a Puppet Drama made by a peasant for a peasant and relying on the permanent and necessary things of life.

The Hungarian puppets, seen at the Conference, afforded a complete antithesis to the examples from Liege. They were entirely modern and sophisticated, and were held from below and mainly worked as silhouettes, relying upon lighting effects and a title, for example "Le Mariage d'un Nu." With the exception of one item, there were no words, but there was an accompaniment from some entirely unfamiliar instrument, which gave rhythmical support and emotional significance. The French contribution of the Guignol Lyonnais was more of the Punch and Judy kind so far as manipulation was concerned, and although the principal character, Guignol, has as history as ancient as that of our Mr. Punch, and was greatly in vogue in the XVIIIth century, he has now discarded his traditional costume and acts in plays of more recent date. The Germans gave us the immortal legend of Dr. Faust and the Czechs an up-to-date Revue. Both performances were realistic, photographic and marvellously skilful imitations of human action, with very carefully staged scenery, lighting and incidental music. The puppets reproduced in miniature the characters on the modern stage.

Monsieur Justin Godart, Senator and former minister, was President of the Congress and made a brilliant speech, both learned and entertaining, at the

* This play is being reprinted at the St. Dominic's Press Ditchling.



CIRCUS HORSE AND RIDER. PUPPETS
BY WILLIAM SIMMONDS.



FOLK SONG: "THE LITTLE OLD
WOMAN AND THE PEDLAR." PUPPETS
BY CLARE BARRY.

THE PARLIAMENT OF PUPPETS

banquet attended by ambassadors from Belgium, Germany and Russia and some three hundred members of the "Unima" Society. He compared the Congress to another at Geneva, but here, he said, the ambassadors were not all of flesh and blood but some were made of wood, lead and other materials. Nevertheless he felt sure that they too, would contribute towards the fellowship of nations. The Vice-President of the French section, Monsieur Leopold Dor, gave a reception for members of the Congress and showed them his collection of Marionettes. These were admirably displayed in cases lit from behind as well as in front, and included examples from XIIth century Liegois to XVIth, XVIIth, and XIXth century Italian, French and English. Asia too was represented by Japanese, Chinese and Tibetan puppets. An extensive library, rich in early engravings and ancient manuscripts, dealing with marionettes completed the collection, which is the result of long and patient research and which will ultimately be given to the State. Monsieur Leopold Dor relies on members of the Society for records of new enterprises, in order to keep his museum up-to-date. The next Congress will be held at Liege in September 1930, when it is hoped that England will be ore strongly represented.

It is regrettable that no performances were given of English Puppet makers—all the more so in that nothing could surpass in loveliness the puppet display recently shown in London by Mr. William Simonds. The making, manipulation and production reveal an artist of the highest order and his exquisite sensitiveness finds a perfect expression in the marionette. In speaking of English puppets mention must also be made of Messrs. Gair and Norman Wilkinson, whose puppets were playing in London last year and who so enchanted the children that "Sammy" become a by word. Their string-puppets act fairy plays and their glove-puppets add old English ballads and folk songs to the repertoire. Also mention must be made of Miss Clare Barry, who shows legends of saints and folk-lore in tableaux settings and conventionalised movements and her work with children has aroused

the interest of educationalists. And of Mr. H. D. C. Pepler of Ditchling who makes very simple, one-stringed puppets and presents the mysteries of the Passion and the Nativity with a directness which is most impressive. His theatre in many respects resembles that of Liege, although his puppets are in no sense an imitation of the ancient ones; yet the differences are superficial, and fundamentally the aim is the same. The interest in the marionette theatre has increased enormously of late years and there are many marionette makers in England, besides these already mentioned, who are producing shows of considerable merit. It is to be hoped that some of them will find their way to Liege next September and show European nations that our English marionette does not begin and end with "Punch and Judy," for Mr. Punch has developed a large circle of distinguished friends and relations, since the days of the XVIIIth century.

DRAMA LEAGUE CLUB ROOM

A recent meeting of the members of the Drama League Club Room appointed the following members to form a Management Committee: Miss Doreen Erroll, Miss Mary Grigs, Mr. John Hughes, Mrs. Skene Laurence, Mr. John Shand and Mrs. Williams. This Committee has already got to work, and is able to announce that, as from the beginning of this month, the Club Room at 8 Adelphi Terrace will be open every day in the week, except Sunday, from 10.30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Light luncheons will be served as well as teas, and refreshments will be obtainable throughout the day. These new amenities will considerably add to the attractiveness of the Club Room, and we look forward to a large increase of membership. It must be said, however, that the Committee retain the right to close the list when the membership threatens to outgrow the limitations of space. As before, the subscription remains at 10s. 6d. annually to members of the League and to members of affiliated societies. Existing country members will still be asked to subscribe only 5s. annually, but no further members will be accepted on this basis.

DRAMA IN THE NEW EDITION OF THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA

By John Shand

WHEN the editor of this journal asked me to read whatever related to the theatre in the new edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica I assented cheerfully, thinking it would mean the perusal of some half-dozen articles. I spent half a day in sorting out from the marvellous Index the references and cross-references to matters theatrical; and when I sat down to an actual reading of the text, I did not finish without having opened all the other twenty-three volumes.

A really considerable space is given to such subjects as; Drama (33 pages); Theatre (24); Shakespeare (20); Stage Design and Lighting (9); Moliere (8); Costume and Design (7); and Masks (5 pages). Articles of from five pages to half a page in length are very numerous. They range from description and criticisms of the plays of Sophocles and the "No Drama" of Japan, to expert opinion on the technique of Stage and Motion Picture Make-up and biographies of Marlowe and Marie Lloyd, and in nearly every case, fine sets of well-reproduced photographs illustrate the text of the more important articles.

There are several ways of entering this maze of knowledge. You may begin by reading the seven long articles; and if you follow every reference and cross-reference you encounter in the text, you cannot avoid learning a good deal of useful information. Another way is to glance in the Index for the names of a few well-known actors and dramatists and producers, or even play titles. Take, for example, Irving, Garrick, Siddons, and Terry. You will find there are nine references to Irving, ten to Garrick, four to Mrs. Siddons, and two to Ellen Terry. Follow all the references and again you will be well into the maze. From Garrick, say, you go on to Goldsmith, Samuel Johnson and Quin; from Goldsmith, you are referred to 18th century comedy, and thus to Drama, and so on until all the volumes have been opened.

Alphabetically, the first long article on the theatre is *Costume Design, Theatrical*.—The first half of it is by Mr. Herman Rosse, President of the American Designers, Gallery. It deals very competently with the history of stage costume. He gives special attention to the "No Drama," saying that "When a fully apparelled "No" actor approaches with cadenced motions on the highly polished floor of the "No" stage, he provides a spectacle never to be forgotten." Classical, mediæval, renaissance, opera, ceremonial costumes all receive notice and are fully illustrated. For this one title there are nine full pages of reproductions, including two magnificent colour plates of costume designs made by Ernest de Weerth. De Weerth also writes the second half of the text, which deals with modern stage costumes. He gives a valuable account of the use he made of rubber sheeting for costumes in a Reinhardt production of "King Lear." He says that the rubber, when painted with metal pigments, takes on a resplendent quality unequalled by any other material. Rubber helmets, with the high lights painted in polished silver, give the effect of steel without the dazzle and noise of real armour. His description, also, of the effect of his canvas and silk costumes for Reinhardt's "Midsummer Night's Dream," make me envious that we cannot see them in England.

In order to be brief, I can best give you an idea of the scope and interest of the article, Drama, by listing the sub-titles (A) and the cross-headings (B). For example:— (A) Drama. (B) Laws of Aristotle, Imitation, Origin of Dramatic Rites, Birth in Religion, varieties of Drama—from the ritual of Osiris to a 20th century cocktail comedy. (A) Indian Drama. (B) Up to the 11th century, Period of Decline, Species of Indian Drama, Construction, Characters, Summary, and so on. The drama of China, Japan, Persia and the rest of Asia, Egypt,

DRAMA AND THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA

Polynesia and Peru, is not neglected; there are five pages on the Greek and Roman theatre, three on the Mediæval. Then under the headings of Modern National Drama, the drama of nearly every European country is separately reviewed. England is allowed over thirteen pages; and paragraphs of anything up to a column in length deal with such matters as, The Reign of Irving, The Arrival of Shaw, Sybil Thorndike, and Gordon Craig. American drama is given only a summary page by Mr. George Jean Nathan, he being of the opinion that indigenous American drama is only just born. However, the encyclopædia balances this in the article, Little Theatre Movement, much of the text of which, and every illustration, concerns itself with America. One would say that the Germans, at least, deserve more attention under this head and the U.S.A. a little less.

Before concluding, I must give a list of some of the short articles worth looking up. The bracketed numbers indicate length in pages:—Acting (2), Acoustics (3½), Aristophanes (1½), Ballet (1½), Beaumont and Fletcher (5), Circus (2½), Cosmetics (2½), Dance (7), Dramatic Criticism (1), Duse (1), English Literature (33), Many refs. to period drama, Euripides (6), Jonson (4), Marionettes (1), and Shaw (2). I will not attempt to enumerate the articles of shorter length, although many of them are well worth perusal. As an instance, I was glad to learn—being ignorant of the fact—that the word "Farce" is etymologically connected with the stage term "to gag." Thus: the Latin word "Farcere," means "to stuff." In France the Roman word became "Farce." Besides meaning "to stuff," it came to be applied to what actors inserted or stuffed into a play. As the impromptu theatre was the comic theatre, the word "Farce" at length described the kind of play in which gagging was most frequent. . . .

But I hear Mr. Whitworth telling me there is no more space. I assure you I could fill this magazine several times with extracts from and comments upon these excellently printed and edited volumes of universal information.

SOME MODERN PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

By Madge Hart

AT Christmas time at home, or in many schools, or the end of the Christmas term, it is the custom to perform one or two plays, and the question "what play?" recurs annually to tease the mind of the producer. One gets thoroughly weary of the hackneyed scenes from Shakespeare, scenes from Dickens, or scenes from Cranford, and there appears to be no reason why one should not tackle a modern play for a change.

Delightful to produce are at least three of the four plays by Naomi Mitchison in her recently published collection, "Nix Naught Nothing." The author states in her preface that "it will probably be found better not to have any players—certainly not more than one—less than three years old"! I have seen children of about eleven enjoy themselves immensely when acting the play "Hobyah! Hobyah!" with great spirit. All the plays are based on fairy stories and contain the sort of exciting incidents that young children love. The scenes may be made perfectly simple, although there is plenty of scope for good producing. I have found these plays especially useful, because there is room in the casts for any number of "extras" of small acting ability. All my "Hobyahs" were children of this type, who thoroughly enjoyed themselves when they had to be ferocious all together, and their "tear down the hemp stalks, eat up the old man and woman and carry off the little girl!" was quite a creditable effort on the day of the performance.

A very short play, which I have found easy to produce in a hurry, with young children who have time to learn dances is "The Duke of Christmas Daisies" by Maysie Edmonston. This is an adaptation of a scene from Sir James Barrie's "Little White Bird," and is quite well done. The Duke of Christmas Daisies is frozen and applies to Queen Mab for one of her fairies to thaw his heart; the fairies all dance before him, but without effect; finally he is thawed by the ragged little marigold fairy, Brownie. This play also gives a chance to act to all the children who do not usually get it; for the supply of fairies and elves may be almost unlimited. The dresses are easy to make and scenery is unnecessary, except for a few shrubs and plants to suggest the Gardens. This is also a good summer play to act out of doors.

With older girls, I have always enjoyed producing "The Princess and the Woodcutter" scene from A. A. Milne's "Make-Believe." Children of any age enjoy watching this play, but it is too difficult for young children to act themselves. The situation is most entertaining: the princess and the woodcutter discover their love for one another and are thoroughly happy until they realise that the king, in the best "history book" tradition, is about to choose a suitable husband

Concluded on page 63.)

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF

THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE.

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THE Conference recently convened by the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee at the House of Commons took immediate steps to set up a Committee to draft a scheme for a National Theatre for subsequent submission to the Prime Minister. Under the Chairmanship of the Earl of Lytton, this Committee is now meeting, and is getting on excellently with its task. The British Drama League, which is adequately represented on the Committee, is further arranging for a Public Meeting to support the scheme, which will take place at the Kingsway Hall on Friday, Jan. 31st, at 8.30 p.m. A strong platform of speakers is promised, including Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Philip Snowden. Further particulars will be duly announced, and those desiring the best seats should apply at once to the Drama League, enclosing 2s. 6d. for a reserved and numbered ticket.

After three successful Holiday Schools at King's College, Kensington, the Council has felt justified in engaging the theatre of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art as the scene of the Easter School of Community Drama for 1930. The actual period will be April 19th to 30th, beginning—in response to many requests—with Easter week-end. Mr. Norman Page has given a provisional promise to direct rehearsals, and to bring a one-act play with a large caste to performance point, besides demonstrating in other plays with as many of the students as desire to be tried on the stage. Miss Fogerty, it is hoped, will repeat the much appreciated classes in diction she gave last year. A new feature will be demonstrations in "Thrift for Wardrobe-mistress and Property-master," by Mrs. Cookson, who can create chefs d'œuvre from such materials as hessian, sugar-bags and old newspapers, with a little dye and gold paint. The fee for the whole period will be 33s. to the general public, 32s. to members of the Drama League and of affiliated societies; week-end, morning and evening courses and single sessions pro rata. For prospectus, apply to Miss Margaret Macnamara, British Drama League.

The year 1930 brings round once more the performances of the Oberammergau Passion Play, which will take place twice weekly from May until the end of August. We hope to arrange with Sir Henry Lunn for special tours for Drama League members and further particulars will be duly announced. In the meanwhile it may interest readers, to know that a first-class eleven days' tour visiting, besides Oberammergau, the cities of Munich, Nuremberg and Aix la Chapelle will cost, inclusive of hotel accommodation, something in the neighbourhood of £25; or £20 for second class travel. A Tour may also be arranged in June to visit Stockholm and the theatres, of the Baltic Cities—this in connection with the Stockholm Exhibition. Those desiring further particulars are invited to send their names to the Secretary of the League.

RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

"Lazarus Laughed" and "Dynamo." By Eugene O'Neil. Cape. 7s. 6d.
"The Cat's Cradle." By Aimee and Philip Stuart. "Thirteen O'Clock." By Anthony Thorne. Benn. 3s. 6d. each.
"After All." By John Van Druten. Putnam. 3s. 6d.

ONE of the drawbacks of this method of piling together some of the more interesting books of the month and reviewing them together in a batch is that too often a book is apt to gain or suffer unfairly by comparison with the books which happen to be next it on the pile. For instance, I suspect that I might have written rather more enthusiastically about some of this month's plays if "Lazarus Laughed" had not been one of their number. "Lazarus Laughed" is perhaps the first great play of what Mr. Ivor Brown calls the Producer's Theatre, and by comparison the two plays which follow it on the list have a curiously unnecessary air. Let me deal with these first.

When I was reading "The Cat's Cradle" I had a feeling that I had read it before. Certainly all the characters seemed very familiar, and one usually knew more or less what they were going to say a moment or two before they said it. The explanation is that this is a typical West End comedy, exactly like dozens of others that I have read or seen, and I confess I am beginning to find it more and more difficult to recognise one from another. Anyway, if you like this sort of thing, "The Cat's Cradle" is very good of its sort—thoroughly efficient, polished, gay, mildly amusing, sometimes even witty. It is, I suppose, "good entertainment:" but in the meantime the cinemas are providing increasingly good entertainment, and it looks as if audiences will soon be less and less inclined to face the huge expense and preposterous discomfort of theatre going to see plays quite as flimsy as this.

"Thirteen O'Clock" is, superficially at least, a little more enterprising. Its setting is a supercity of the future, and it begins promisingly enough as a criticism of industrialism expressed in terms of the theatre. But it soon trails off into melodrama, and finally peters out as a feebly sentimental love-story of the novelettish sort. The melodrama, while it lasts, is excellent and provides one thoroughly dramatic scene which makes the first half of the play well worth reading.

The writers of both these plays have essentially the same weakness, a weakness common to a great deal of English play writing at the moment: it is that they never plunge into their subject boldly and whole-heartedly: they paddle and splash at the edge of it, quite content if they can pick out one or two comparatively trivial points, something sufficient to keep their characters chattering amiably through three neat little acts. On the other hand Mr. Druten in his new play does give one the impression that he wrote it because he had something to say, instead of first deciding to write a play and then looking round for some triviality to write about. The result is that the theme is used with respect, instead of as a mere peg. His theme is the one which inspired the best scenes in "Young Woodley"

and "Diversion"—the relations of parents and children. Since its production by the Incorporated Stage Society and the Three Hundred Club, it has been very largely revised and re-written, but it still seems to me to lack any dramatically significant form or pattern. One feels that it is the work of an author who has mastered plenty of the tricks of the trade of play-writing, but whose mind is essentially that of the novelist rather than the playwright—an impression which is very much strengthened when one remembers the superiority of the novel of "Young Woodley" over the play. But it is an undeniably moving and interesting piece of work, the sort of play which is written to express something which has been keenly experienced in the author's mind, instead of being merely concocted to keep diners-out from getting bored.

In "Dynamo" we are back to the kind of play which one suspects is inspired by nothing stronger than a feeling that here was an idea which might make rather a good play. It is the story of a young man who rejects the old religions but is driven to find some new outlet to his worshipping instinct; his search ends in madness and the play closes with him praying to the dynamo he has set up as his god. The trouble is that O'Neil never seems to have convinced himself that he really believed in his theme of the conflict between science and religion. The result is that he forces his writing and we get a play which is sheer melodrama interrupted by some rather confused argument. Nevertheless I do not think the play deserved the mauling it got from the American critics on its production in New York. It is written with tremendous vigour, it is never dull, and throughout the author uses the theatre with all his old boldness and relish.

It is this realisation of the infinite possibilities of the modern theatre which makes O'Neil a playwright of such outstanding importance. Most playwrights seem quite oblivious of the enormous improvements which have lately been made on the theatre as an instrument of expression by theatre architects, technicians, designers, and producers. Yet the playwrights continue to write for the narrow confines of the photo-frame theatre, trimming their ideas and narrowing their range of vision so that the picture will fit. It is as if musicians had continued to write solely for small string orchestras long after the modern symphony orchestra had come into being. "Lazarus Laughed" is a full symphony written for the new theatre, making superb use of expressive (instead of imitative) scenery and costumes, of rhythmic movement and stylised gesture, of expressionistic speech, of masks, of sensitive lighting, of all the other means of expression which the new theatre and its servants offers to its writers. Yet none of these means of expression is here used for its own sake, but always as the most vivid way of expressing the surge and sweep of emotion which rushes through the play. This is poetic drama re-created in the terms of the new theatre, expressing itself not only in the rhythms of the ear but also in the rhythms of the eye, producing an effect which deeply and intensely moving, with a new and exciting beauty of its own. It is a play which gives to the theatre a new significance and a new dignity.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THEATRE MANAGERS AS PLAY CHOOSERS

SIR,—In the Minutes of the Northampton Conference, as recorded in this month's "Drama," Mr. Alec Rea is reported to have stated that "as a West-End theatre manager, he experienced great difficulty in finding good plays. He had once offered £100 and a production in the West-End for a new play, and not one was found good enough for production."

With great respect for the speaker, and without of course for one instant impugning his good faith, may I say that I regard this statement with profound scepticism?

I should like, if I may do so, to relate a small experience of my own. Some years ago a little comedy of mine took the first place in a British Drama League group competition for one-act plays, and, acting on the advice of the adjudicator, who told me that the piece was eminently suitable for the music halls, I proceeded to submit it to a large—a very large—number of star actors and actresses, most of whom were, or had been, themselves in management. The play in due course came back. The wording of the letters rejecting it varied, but their purport was, with but few exceptions, the same: that whatever might or might not be the intrinsic merit of the piece, there was one purpose for which it was hopelessly and entirely unsuitable—namely, the music hall stage.

At the beginning of this year, some seven or eight years after it had been written, Miss Olga Lindo happened to read the little comedy, and (doubtless in ignorance of the real requirements of variety) took it with her to the Coliseum. There it remained in the bill not for the usual one or two weeks, but for no less than four weeks, with a narrow escape, as I was told, of being booked on for a further week. Thence it proceeded again to the provinces—to more music halls—and is, I believe, still being occasionally played. This of a piece which all those eminent authorities declared to be hopelessly unsuited to the variety stage.

Now the question of whether or no my little piece was ever produced, is, in itself, a matter of small importance. But when work of the calibre of "A Message from Mars," or "Journey's End"—to take two instances haphazard—is hawked about by the unfortunate authors from manager to manager, sometimes for years, presumably because it is not "good enough for production," the thing becomes more serious, and an obscure and, by this time, hopelessly disillusioned playwright may be pardoned perhaps for regarding a statement of the kind now attributed to Mr. Alec Rea with something more than polite astonishment.

The fact is, as experience shows, the real difficulty lies not merely in the dearth of good plays, but in the even greater dearth of managers able to recognize a good play when they see one.

Yours faithfully,

LEONARD WHITE.

THE REPERTORY EXPERIMENT

SIR,—Two questions were raised by Mr. Francis Graves in his article on the Northampton Repertory Players, for the October "Drama."

As secretary of the largest amateur dramatic organisation in Nottingham—the Playgoers Club—which arose at the time of the Nottingham Repertory Theatre under the Compton Family, I may claim to have some knowledge of the pitfalls which await the unwary repertorist.

Northampton has discovered that if the theatre be closed for say three of the summer months, the people will welcome it back with open arms, whereas if it is open continuously, public support tends to drop away and financial loss ensues. This is entirely true. Indeed there are several professional theatres in the larger cities which even now close during August, with profitable results. Any repertory movement should bear this in mind.

The second question raised is that of the claims of artist v. play. I do not think that the loss of audience which results from the departure of a particular artist, be he never so popular, is at all commensurate with the loss of public incurred through retaining the same artists and company for too long periods.

Certainly in Nottingham one of the greatest factors against which we had to contend was the oft repeated assertion that people did not wish to go to the Repertory Theatre to see the same actors again. This, not because the actors were bad—for they were not—but because human nature palls at the prospect of watching the same artist week by week. One gets to know instinctively the mannerisms and characteristics of each actor; one knows exactly how he will say a certain passage, how his entrances will be effected, indeed one can almost prophesy what he will say next.

The fact is that an undue strain is put upon any artist who is compelled to remain month after month in the same theatre, playing to the same House.

There is but one practical remedy. First the repertory theatre must periodically close. Second it must change its companies frequently.

And how is this to be done?

With Repertory Theatres in Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Northampton, etc., it should now be possible to come to some arrangement with the respective managements whereby circular tours are arranged between these houses. One play, instead then of lasting a fortnight, would play for two weeks in each co-operating theatre. This would save the excessive labour which repertory work demands from the artists, it would save the public from ennui, it would replenish the box office, it would bring new ideas of interpretation and production into each town in the union. Can it be done?

Yours faithfully,

NEVIL TRUMAN.

A NOTE ON THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE

At 81 Endell Street, London

WHO is not a child at heart? When the long day's work is set aside, and dreamy relaxation may be allowed to creep over one for the few precious hours of leisure, surely there is no pleasanter way out of one's worries and one's self than to steal stealthily back into the joys of one's youth. Agreed? Then go to the Children's Theatre.

There one can experience the thrill of a "real live" highwayman as he carries forward his nefarious trade; or shake with merriment at the awkwardness of a "pseudo-highwayman"; food, indeed, for a properly youthful mind! and, even if one is brought somewhat nearer to adolescence during the beautiful tableau of "My Lady Greensleeves," or other such gem, one scarcely notices it.

The Children's Theatre is indeed the home of Romance for all ages, from seven to seventy; and we doubt whether even such wide limits as that, completely bound the possibilities at either end.

Each audience of children has its peculiarities, as the actors and actresses will tell you, even more marked than is the case with adult audiences; each evening, for those same splendid workers, professionals all, who are practically giving their services in this great cause, has its spice of adventure. One can never fortell what emergency may arise demanding every bit as much ingenuity of momentary invention to overcome it as a past master of stage gagging or back chat could exert.

This, without going into detail, is the treasure which is hidden away in Endell Street. We said above that it was a great cause, and truly it is. It may be that no greater has become a concrete fact of the theatre during this century. One cannot over-estimate the value of educating, firstly, a taste for the theatre in the young; and secondly, and no less important, a good taste. A mind brought up to approve and enjoy such beauty of presentation as is achieved in every programme at the Children's Theatre—

mingled as it invariably is with the brightest of rollicking good fun—would never sanction some of the nauseating trash that is flung at the feet of modern audiences. One is not advocating an "educational" tendency at this delightful home of drama; nor would it be supplied if one did. But one is greatly approving of the high level of quality in material, discernment in effectiveness, and brilliance of touch, which are so evident throughout programme after programme.

Yes! Go to the Children's Theatre, and remain young. Forget your cares; you will not fail to. And learn what can be done upon a stage where it is not possible to accommodate comfortably more than four persons at a time. Go to the Children's Theatre, and behold a pantomime at Christmas time, more beautiful in its simple, charming way than the vast elaborations of the West End of London. Cinderella never caught one up in sympathy so surely in one's life before as at the Children's Theatre last year; doubtless Jack and his beanstalk will delight one as surely and simply this coming Boxing Day.

PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

(Continued from page 59.)

for his daughter. There are three eligible princes: the silent and morose Blue Prince, the Red Prince, who is talkative and boastful, and a foolishly exquisite Yellow Prince. The woodcutter overhears a plan being discussed by the king and queen: the queen is about to disguise herself as a beggar woman and beg from the three princes in turn, and the most generous prince is to marry her daughter. The woodcutter discovers the plot to each of the three princes and furnishes each with a crust of bread with which to feed the "beggar woman"! The queen is horrified when the first prince, not only offers her his "last crust of bread" but forces her to eat it. When the other two princes pursue the same tactics, she collapses entirely, and when the woodcutter rushes forward with some wine to take away the effects of the bread, she gratefully suggests that he shall marry the princess. The characters of the king, the queen, and the three princes all give an excellent opportunity for good acting.

THE CHURCH AND THE THEATRE*

By the Rev. J. Trevor Lewis

BETWEEN these two there has been an age-long controversy. Hard words have been exchanged; the church has accused the stage of worldliness, irreligion, immorality, and the stage has accused the church of ignorance, narrowness, failure to appreciate new conditions of the drama and of the time: each has viewed the other in a spirit of hardly veiled contempt. Now there is a sneaking acquaintance going on between them, a great change of private feeling. It is being seen that the hostility of the one for the other has lain primarily in a confusion of ideas.

A glance at history will show how this confusion arose. The Church has no guidance on this question from the New Testament. The drama is not mentioned from end to end of the book. Why? Because there was no drama in Palestine: the Jews had no plays, no theatre; their genius did not lie that way. The world's education, however, has not been confined to Jewry—here, as everywhere there has been a sub-division of labour. And across the blue Mediterranean, in the sunny realms of Greece, another department of the human culture, the cult of the intellect, of the arts and beauty, was being carried on with unexampled splendour of achievement. In these two lands, separated only by a few miles of sea, were being carried on, almost unknown to each other, the two great equally vital processes of human learning, the discipline of the intellect and the discipline of the soul.

Greece had its drama; and the significant thing is that that drama was its religion, if not the altar of it, the pulpit of it. In Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, you have the preachers in that pulpit. It was in their plays, read and discussed in public, thus the Greek mind discussed its profoundest problems: problems of life, of morality; Fate, Freewill. A gloomy religion and a terrible theology, it must be confessed; men and women pursued by Fate, possessed by demoniac powers which tempt them

to hideous crimes and pursue and punish them with relentless fury. But that was the Greek way. Call their religion good or bad, it was their religion, their interpretation of man and the universe. Here Greek thought reached its highest and deepest. Certainly it never occurred to these people to regard the drama as irreligious. To suggest it would be like telling the Jew that Moses and Isaiah were irreligious.

Then came Jesus Christ. Civilisation turned a corner of the road and met Him and His Church. His Church spread through the Roman world which had now absorbed the Greek, and we find the Christian Fathers dead against the Roman theatre and the whole range of its amusement. For two reasons:—

1. The early Christians had thrills enough and excitement enough in their lives without needing these stimulants; they lived in constant mortal peril. What they knew of the "Shows" was in the way of contributing as victims to the amusement of the populace.

2. The theatre, the spectacles, the whole scheme of amusement were such as would to-day excite nothing but horror. Augustine describes how his friend, Alypius, taken by companions to one of these shows, "kept his eyes shut, hating it; but hearing a cry, opening them, was seized with a passion for blood!"

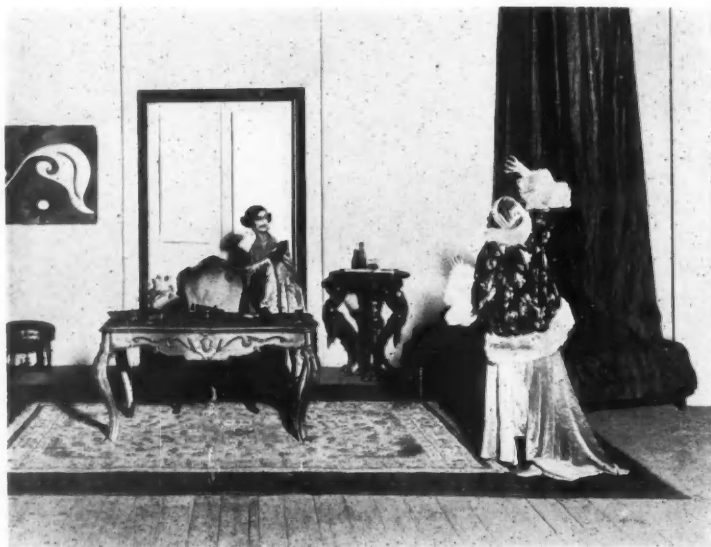
The church's protest was a protest against lust and savagery, a protest which mightily helped to clean the world.

Then we come to the mediæval times. The church had now become master, the controller and director of life. And life, human life, contains among other things the dramatic instinct. We all have it as children and it does not die as we grow up. The impulse to reproduce, to express by picture and spoken word the great scenes, the great characters that move us; to make in this way the past to live again; to exhibit by voice and gesture and vivid movement the stirring realities of life, its humour, pathos, tragedy; this is a common inheritance and in some an over-mastering passion.

* The substance of the Sermon preached at All Saints' Church, Northampton, on Sunday, October 30th, on the occasion of the Drama League Conference.



"MY LADY GREENSLEEVEES"
CHILDRENS THEATRE PRODUCTION.



SCENE FROM "INTERFERENCE"
AS RECENTLY PRESENTED BY THE
MEDWAY THEATRE CLUB.
(See page 68.)

THE CHURCH AND THE THEATRE

The Church discovered this; bestirred itself to give the people all it needed, all that human nature called for.

It gave it spectacles; it was itself a spectacle in its glorious buildings, its statues, its pictures, its ritual and its solemn music. And it went one step further, it gave them the play. The Church miracle plays were the most extraordinary development of that time. The Church was the universal managing director of social life.

Since then the movement of the world has been in the direction of division of labour. The care of the poor, education, literature have each ceased to be a Church monopoly and have started in business for themselves. So it was with the drama. The alliance was over; it has never been renewed.

The theatre became entirely independent of church standards and church authority. The Puritans, it is true, did their best to destroy the stage. They ruled England and ruled her magnificently. But though they ruled England they were not England; they had not carried the people with them; their express train went at a great rate but the carriages were not properly linked to the engine.

All this is now behind us. But the Church and the Theatre are still here, each an immense living force.

What has this history to teach us? That in us there is an irrepressible dramatic instinct, and in some of us a genius for it. That it is with drama as with literature. Nobody dreams of calling literature un-Christian. We know there are good books and bad; reading that helps and reading that hurts. We must discriminate between the good play and the bad one; countenance the one and denounce the other.

The good theatre and the good play are, thank God, with us already; there are good men writing plays and good men acting them. The Theatre is here, a great and growing fact, enshrined in the affection of the people. The business of the Church, then, is to recognise the fact, to take its good and make it better, and to use its utmost power to purge what evil clings to it.

EVERYBODY'S CYCLORAMA

By John Hampden

MR. NORMAN MARSHALL'S recent remark, that there is much amateur drama and little amateur stagecraft, must have awakened an answering regret in many readers; 'tis true, 'tis pity and pity 'tis 'tis true. This is not the place to take up Mr. Basil Dean's pretty gauntlet, and discuss whether the "individual Art Theatre" should occupy itself primarily in fostering authorship and acting, rather than with experiments in presentation; most of us will safely agree that, though the play and the acting may be *the* thing, amateurs should be more adventurous in stagecraft. They would find it healthy to step outside their curtains and their neat box-sets occasionally, into the open spaces of hill-top and moor and forest. Even a glimpse of blue sky through an open window is an inspiring thing. But how is it to be done? The solution of that problem, like the solution of so many amateur problems, lies in stage-lighting—because lighting is cheap and flexible, individual and above all artistic.

In lighting an open-air setting, a cyclorama is the first and most obvious need, and a need easy to supply. My own society sighs no longer for the ideal but unattainable cemented dome, having obtained a very satisfactory substitute at a cost of 16s 9d. It consists of a large curtain made of white butter-muslin, at fourpence three-farthings a yard. A local draper supplied the muslin and made it up, with a strong tape along all four sides and rings along the top, for 16s 3d. Home-dyeing with cold water dye, to a very pale grey, cost the remaining sixpence. (One can buy grey gauze in various shades, but there is much to be said financially and artistically for doing one's own dyeing.) This curtain is hung in a curve on a strong wire, the bottom is drawn taut to the floor by battens, and strings—*not* battens—fastened at intervals down the sides tighten it until there is not the slightest trace of wrinkle or seam. Two or three feet behind it is hung an

EVERYBODY'S CYCLORAMA

old curtain of casement cloth, a light saxe blue. Paper or distemper or anything else of a suitable colour would serve equally well, but there must be a background because the muslin passes a good deal of light. Flood-lit from carefully calculated angles this curtain has given astonishingly good results, with an illusion of depth and distance, a beauty and graduation of colouring, which have hitherto been impossible on a small fit-up stage that has to be erected in frantic haste. The best shade of grey was decided by experiment at very little cost. Two yards of the butter-muslin, torn into pieces and dyed in various shades of grey with two pennyworth of dye; flood-lights made of biscuit-boxes, with five hundred-watt lamps in each

a few sheets of coloured gelatine; and a large sheet of cardboard with a hole through which to look at the small pieces of muslin—this was all the equipment needed.

When the cyclorama is fitted up there still remain experiments to decide the angle, power and colour of lights, acting-area lights included, but the results repay a thousandfold the trouble involved. And the experimenters who have come so far, even if they have no technical knowledge, will surely buy a manual of electricity and one of Mr. Harold Ridge's invaluable books on lighting, and press on until they have the switchboard and the battery of liquid dimmers, again at surprisingly low cost, with which stage-lighting can be made the actor's most potent ally—a thing of memorable and subtle beauty.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

DARTMOUTH

About a year ago I started a Society here at Dartmouth which we have called "The Dartmouth Players." I first of all rehearsed them in three small plays which in the Early Spring they produced and with great success!

Then this autumn about five weeks ago I produced "It Pays to Advertise" after having persuaded the local council to help us to install new scenery and appointments. The performance far exceeded my wildest hopes. We gave two performances and repeated it at the request of the Teignmouth people and had there an even greater success than at Dartmouth. Meanwhile finding that many of our younger and so far untried members were anxious to try what they could do we arranged for prizes to be given for the best played duologues and two performances were given in which to decide who were the winners. Our membership has steadily increased and is now very few short of 200. Every fortnight we have "Readings" of plays, which are extremely popular.

The whole thing they are good enough to say here has done a lot of good in Dartmouth and we are all extremely proud of the success of the Society.

Miss Payne of 134 Victoria Road, Dartmouth, is our able and very hardworking secretary. The society is composed of all sorts and kinds of people, and every one works well and utterly without any class feeling together.

We are now submitting "The Farmer's Wife," and we hope to give what will prove to be an unequalled performance of a *Devonshire* play, as all the cast are from Devon people.

CYRIL MAUDE.

GLASGOW

A Course of Dramatic Art and Production commenced in October and runs on till Easter. The Course comprises:—

A comprehensive survey of the History of the Drama and of the Theatre, from those of Ancient Greece to those of the present day. It includes also standard and original theories of Art as a whole, Dramatic Art, and the Production of Plays, and provides for the development of self-expression from the students themselves, by ample opportunities for discussion, and for practical work by the home dramatising of a story; annotating plays for production, casting the same plays, and preparing plots for Movement, Scenic Design (in Plan and Coloured Elevation) Sound Lighting and Make-up.

The Historical periods covered include Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, Japanese No, European Mediaeval, English Elizabethan, French Neo-classic and Comedy, English Restoration, 18th Century English, and the social drama commencing with Ibsen, and including all the "moderns" of Europe.

The theoretical aspects of Drama and its Production include studies of Aristotle's "Poetics," and his "Unities," Meredith's "Comedy," Croce's "Essence of Esthetic," Tansley's "The New Psychology," Bergson's "Essays on Laughter, etc., and the accepted authorities on the practical problems augmented by the lecturer's first-hand experience in stage and broadcast production.

The plays chosen for practical work include Shaw and Tchekhov, while the practical side includes discussions, theories and exercise in Voice Production, Gesture and Mime, and the cinema talks using trade photographs of facial expression, etc.

HALBERT TATLOCK.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

ACTON W.E.A. REPERTORY COMPANY

This Company which is recruited from W.E.A. students in Acton and Ealing, opened the season with a two-night programme of plays, "The Rising of the Moon" (Lady Gregory), followed by "The Shadow of a Gun-man," (Sean O'Casey) and "The Cherry Orchard" (Tchehov), on Wednesday and Thursday, October 30th and 31st. Of the two Irish plays the hand of the producer Mr. Barney Mulligan was most effective in the "Gunman," in which he played the leading role. A complete cast of Irish men and women undoubtedly considerably assisted in the success both productions achieved.

"The Cherry Orchard" on the other hand was a second performance by the Company, and in the rhythm and balance of performance shewed clearly that a devoted team were working with and for Tchehov. The decor, dresses and furniture were in tune with the familiar tone of this great Russian dramatist, and all concerned in the production deserve full credit for a notable effort. The Company aims at a high level of production and the Hon. Secretary, Mr. G. E. Clayton, 56 Lindfield Road, Ealing W.5, will be glad to hear from people similarly interested in the masters of dramatic literature.

THE NEWTON ABBOT REPERTORY COMPANY

The Newton Abbot Repertory Company opened its Autumn Session on September 28th, with the co-operation of the Bovey Tracey Dramatic Society, the Dawlish Players and the Teignmouth Literary Society in the production of four one-act plays and a presidential address by Dr. du Garde Peach on "Experimental Drama." In the course of a most interesting speech Dr. Peach described all drama as experimental, and contended that the real danger of the theatre lay in copying the successful thing. To experiment and try out was a vital task for the amateur. It was a dangerous path to tread, but they had courage and a love for the work even if they had no money, and it was their sacred job. The President's remarks came extremely apropos after the production of two original plays, the Bovey Tracey Dramatic Society having presented "Second Fiddle," by Dorothy Rowlands, and the Newton Repertory Company "Chelsea on the Moors," a Dartmoor comedy specially written for the company by E. W. Sanders.

The Dawlish Players gave "The Old Bull," by Bernard Gilbert, and the Teignmouth Literary Society concluded with "The Devil among the Skins," by E. Goodwin.

Among the Newton Company's forthcoming productions are Sir James Barries' "Mary Rose," "Sierra's Cradle Song," another new three-act play by Dr. du Garde Peach, whose Comedy of Bad Manners—"Orienting Olga," proved one of the most successful productions of last session.

BIRKBECK COLLEGE

This year's production of the Birkbeck College Amateur Dramatic Society, "Outward Bound," by Sutton Vane, in the College Theatre on Friday and Saturday the 22nd and 23rd November, attained a standard of excellence both in its staging and in the competence of the acting, which reflects great credit to the players and to the producer, Miss Nora Stewart.

Whether intentionally or not, the "noises off" caused as much consternation in the audience as in the players themselves, but all left the theatre after an entertaining though provocative evening, which was enhanced by the really excellent characterisation of each of the parts played.

Altogether a very successful show.

NEW LANCASHIRE GARRICK CLUB

Burnley (Lancashire) for a good many years had two, and more recently, three amateur societies, and amateur interest and enthusiasm have now "proliferated," as Mr. H. G. Wells might say, in the form of a Garrick Club, in which all the societies are represented. The first meeting was held on October 9th, when there was an inaugural address by the President, Mr. Rought Brooks, editor of the "Burnley News," and a production of Mr. A. A. Milne's semi farcical one-act play, "Wurzel Flummery."

In his address the President "spoke up" pretty forcibly for the drama of the theatre, as opposed to the talkie and silent screen variations of its message.

Incidentally he invited the local authority of the town to consider whether they ought not to establish a municipal theatre. The Burnley Town Council happen to be the indirect administrators of a fairly opulent trust fund which provides high class municipal concerts and buys pictures for the local art collection.

Mr. Brooks suggested that the encouragement of dramatic art might very well be deceived to come within the legal scope of the trust.

The performance of "Wurzel Flummery" concluded the evening, and was much enjoyed by the listening members. The Club has a membership of 180 and an interesting programme has been arranged for the season.

VICTORIA STREET DERBY A.D.S.

The above Society is to be congratulated on their success in winning the Shield at the Chatsworth Fete held on July 20th. Eight groups entered for the Drama Competition which was arranged by the Derbyshire Rural Community Council. A wide variety of one-act plays was given. The Adjudicator, Dr. Du Garde Peach, complimented the Victoria Street players on their charming performance of Barrie's Rosalind in which he thought the pace was excellently maintained. Miss Fraser was the producer.

K. I. J.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

ST. BRIDE'S INSTITUTE DRAMATIC SOCIETY IN "THE MASK AND THE FACE"

This brilliant farcical satire is one of the most difficult to get just right, even for a professional company, and Mr. Eric Holmes deserves praise for the manner in which he made this involved play clear, and for the way he managed the movements on so small a stage. Certainly more fun might have been got out of the funeral scene, and the whole thing been a little more sophisticated.

The actors were held together by the two principals, particularly by her who played "Savina"—wholly delicious, and in quite the right key. There was a tendency to obvious extravagance in one or two parts, and unfortunately the prompter was too much in evidence.

ROBERT NEWTON.

NORTH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL OF DRAMA

An enjoyable school of Drama was held at the Bensham Grove Settlement, Gateshead, from 14th to 21st September.

The conductors of the school were Miss Marian Radford of the Citizen House, Bath, and Mr. Norman Marshall of the Festival Theatre, Cambridge, two hard-working enthusiasts, who kept the interest of every one at a high pitch throughout the week. To them are indebted some 150 students drawn from the Amateur Societies of Northumberland and Durham who followed the lectures with the keenest interest and took part in the rehearsals with enthusiasm.

The school concluded with a delightful Mummers Party, at which Miss Sybil Thorndike, accompanied by her husband, presented the prizes. This demonstration of Miss Thorndike's interest in the Amateur Stage aroused great enthusiasm, and her visit will be the more memorable by her encouraging comments on the work of amateur dramatic societies.

THE HORSHAM PLAYERS

"Hay Fever," probably the best light comedy written since the war, is a play attempted much too frequently by amateurs, considering its unsuitability for amateur acting. A play essentially of froth and bubble, "bon mots" and delicate situations, requires considerable technical ability, so that the best may be got out of it. A subtle and skilful pointing of comedy lines is required, and this is what an amateur finds so difficult to do, because he has never had the chance of being able to play a part for sufficient length of time to be able to gauge his audience—to be able to tell which lines are "getting over" and which are not. It is therefore, because of this, that many of Mr. Coward's best lines were lost by the Horsham Players. Apart from this, and an uncertain beginning, the play was well acted, and one was pleasantly conscious of how well the company played together, credit for which must go to W. Owen Hobgen, the producer.

ROBERT NEWTON.

THE MEDWAY THEATRE CLUB

On November 4th the Medway Theatre Club presented "Interference" at the Palace Theatre, Maidstone, playing twice nightly for one week.

Production was in the hands of Mr. Robert Newton, who had the courage to give his own interpretation to the play, and it was interesting to contrast the result with that achieved by the more restrained treatment at St. James' Theatre. At times Mr. Newton allowed himself, unintentionally, it may be, to flirt with expressionism—a dangerous experiment, but in this case justified by the result. The emotional crisis of the second act was sustained and pointed by these means; at this point, perhaps, the underlining was just a little too heavy, but the skill of the principals carried it to a successful conclusion.

It is difficult to single out any individual performance for special attention,—a tribute to the manner in which the cast worked together. Mr. Bernard Benson played the part of Dr. Marley, and made a great success of it. Miss Joan Gibb made an excellent Lady Marley; although, in her more intense moments she was not entirely comfortable, her lighter passages were very good indeed. Miss Beatrice Sirette seemed somewhat miscast in the part of Deborah Kane, but made the most of her dramatic moments, and together with Mr. Robert Newton, successfully weathered the storms of Act II.

Taken as a whole, this was a clean and careful production, and the Medway Club are to be congratulated on the determination with which they tackled and held a difficult audience. On this occasion the audience merited far more adverse criticism than the actors and actresses.

ERIC HOLMES.

BRITANNIC HOUSE PLAYERS

Oscar Wilde's comedy, "The Ideal Husband," was presented by the Britannic House Players at the Blackfriars Theatre, London, on the evenings of November 6th, 7th and 8th, before audiences which filled the theatre each evening. A modernised version of the play was used, and the presentation ran with almost professional smoothness in the hands of an efficient cast.

A particularly finished performance was given by Miss Justina Smith, whose interpretation of the part of Mrs. Cheveley was remarkably convincing and quite according to the Oscar Wilde tradition. Miss Phillips as the garrulous Lady Markby, though a little halting at the start, carried all before her in the second act. Miss Inglis and Mr. Butt as the young lovers were a well-matched pair whose acting and appearance were alike satisfying.

The excellent attendance at the performances was proof enough of the popularity of this Society, which, only a few years ago, started as a small band of enthusiasts whose plays were very modestly presented at the Britannic House Sports Club Pavilion at Lower Sydenham.

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